



Evolution of NSCAS: The NSCAS Adaptive Through-year Model Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are we changing from NSCAS to something else?

No. The transition to an adaptive through-year assessment model that combines the best of MAP Growth and the NSCAS General Summative test is part of the intentional progression of NSCAS that we have been working toward in partnership with districts over time. This effort, which currently applies to mathematics and English language arts (ELA) for grades 3-8, builds on the work we have done statewide to create an assessment system that is instructionally useful, meaningful to students, and connected to classroom practice.

2. How is the NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model different from MAP Growth?

Adaptive through-year assessment is different from, but similar to MAP Growth. MAP Growth is aligned to state standards but adapts across grade levels. It is not designed to measure grade-level performance or produce summative proficiency scores. In contrast, NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment will be aligned not only to state standards but also to the state summative blueprint. It will yield grade level performance data throughout the school year and produce summative proficiency scores at year's end – while still adapting outside of grade level and measuring growth. Because NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment provides the same kind of data as MAP Growth, plus additional information on proficiency, it will be administered instead of MAP Growth.

3. Will the NSCAS adaptive through-year model – with three test administrations during the year – increase stress on students and teachers?

Many Nebraska districts already administer three MAP Growth tests during the year. The NSCAS adaptive through-year assessments are being designed to feel similar to MAP Growth and serve as an instructional tool that is part of regular school year activity, with timely results that help students and teachers advance learning. So we don't expect the assessments to increase stress; the goal is to add value in the classroom and decrease overall strain. Schools will no longer have to navigate two different testing procedures and systems and their efforts will not come down to a single testing event – pressure will be reduced, as students will have multiple chances to demonstrate proficiency. In addition, overall testing will be reduced due to the elimination of the summative test, freeing up more classroom time for learning.

4. Will all three test administrations be required?

Many Nebraska districts already administer MAP Growth three times a year, and since NSCAS adaptive through-year assessments will feel similar and provide even better data, we expect most districts will choose to use them. Districts may choose not to administer the fall and winter assessments but they will have limited information to inform instruction and monitor growth and will have a spring experience that is augmented to ensure blueprint coverage is met.

5. If a student shows proficiency in fall or winter, do they still have to take the spring assessment?

Students can show proficiency on concepts before the spring administration, but they must take the spring assessment, as it produces the *summative* proficiency scores, which reflect a student's grade level performance at year's end. However, the spring test is *not* a traditional summative test. The summative scores produced in the spring are based on student performance across the fall, winter, and spring tests; each test picks up where the student left off on the last test. For example, if a student already demonstrated grade-level proficiency (On Track) in the winter, the spring test will pick up where the student left off, and then continue to adapt into the College & Career Ready level within the standards (and up into the next grade if student performance merits it). The summative scores that are produced in the spring are a culmination of the student's grade-level performance across the three assessments.

6. Does this assessment model impact local control of curriculum and pacing?

The adaptive through-year assessment model is designed to better support teaching and learning and retain local control of curriculum and pacing. NWEA will work with Nebraska districts and educators to gain an understanding of their typical content progressions, but because through-year assessment is adaptive, it does not require Nebraska districts to use the same pacing guides or curricula. Each assessment will adjust based on the learner's performance on the previous assessment. This means students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency throughout the year. For example, if a concept is introduced on the fall assessment before it has been taught or learned, the student will have another chance to show mastery on the winter assessment (and another chance on the spring assessment, if needed).

7. What does this mean for students that move into my district mid-year or later?

The NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model will be designed to accommodate student mobility. For students that move from one school to another within a district or across districts, the student's test scores and test history will be transferred with the student through our rostering/unique identifier process. The student's longitudinal history (within and across years) will follow them. NWEA will work with NDE to determine the business rules for identifying the school/teacher of record for summative reporting purposes.

For students who transfer to a Nebraska school from out of state in the middle of an academic year, the adaptive design will adjust to the fact that the student doesn't have a test history from the fall (or potentially winter) and give them the opportunity to show that they

know and can do relative to grade-level expectations. This may result in a somewhat longer test event that adapts less outside of grade level, depending on the state's preference and when the student enrolls in a new school in the state.

8. What will reporting timelines be like once NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment is in place? Will students get immediate results? What will those results look like (fall, winter, spring)?

District and school practitioners will continue to receive interim data in the fall, winter, and spring with the same turnaround times as MAP Growth. That will mean student-level results will be available after testing and aggregate results (class/school/district) will be available 24 hours after testing is declared complete in any given test season for any given district. Reports will provide information on growth, grade-level performance, and student learning needs (whether on or off grade level).

Producing summative accountability scores at year's end will be on a slightly different cadence, because it requires that all districts have completed testing and psychometric validation has been completed to ensure students are placed in the appropriate categories relative to the standards/cut scores established by the state. Even with this nuance, the intention, once the through-year model is fully implemented, is to return summative results to district and state stakeholders soon after the spring assessment is complete.

9. Will we still have national norms to compare achievement and growth data? What happens to historical MAP Growth data?

With the NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model, districts will still have access to RIT and norms information and will be able to look at longitudinal MAP Growth data. It will allow Nebraska educators to get the value they have come to expect from MAP Growth, plus the added value of grade-level performance information throughout the year – while also producing summative proficiency scores for accountability at the end of the school year.

10. Will the MAP Growth Learning Continuum be part of NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment?

Educators in participating districts will still have access to the MAP Growth Learning Continuum in fall 2020 and will transition to a similar tool that is specific to the NSCAS adaptive through-year model after winter 2021. The new tool will be rooted in Nebraska's ALDs in support of efforts to scaffold students toward standards-based learning targets.

11. Will the test adapt as far outside of grade level as the student needs, like MAP Growth does today?

NDE will work with districts to collect feedback on this and will confer with NWEA to determine the degree of adaptivity. NWEA will also conduct research studies as the through-year model is being developed and field tested to help inform decisions about the degree of adaptivity needed to reveal what each student is ready to learn next.

12. How will this move to the NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model impact us if we have been using MAP Growth to assess third grade reading as part of the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act?

We expect that you will be able to use NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment instead of MAP Growth to measure third grade reading performance relative to the state summative blueprint, while continuing to use MAP Growth to measure reading performance in grades K-2. NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment will provide RIT information that will enable continued longitudinal tracking of individual student growth across grades K-12. Linking studies will be conducted to identify the through-year equivalent of a MAP Growth Reading threshold score.

13. What about grades K-2 and high school? What about science?

The NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model will be for Nebraska students in grades 3-8 for math and English language arts. Third year high school students in Nebraska will continue to take the NSCAS ACT for accountability purposes. Currently, NDE is exploring a different assessment model for science, in light of the three-dimensionality of Nebraska's college and career ready science standards.

14. What opportunities will there be for educators to provide feedback on the NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model as we move toward its implementation?

NDE will be meeting throughout the 2019-20 school year to collect feedback from different district and educator stakeholder groups and will provide districts with resources to support communication with their stakeholders about our movement toward the NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment model. In addition, as we begin to develop reports for the full-fledged NSCAS adaptive through-year assessment, we expect to collect feedback from administrators, teachers, parents, and students about the report functionality that will be most useful to them.